

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY  
Charter Review Commission**

**Minutes**

**Wednesday April 12, 2006  
Public Meeting Room No. 1  
First Floor, County Administration Building East  
Everett, Washington**

**Commission Members Present:** Mike Cooper, Kim Halvorson, Gail Rauch, Ryan Larsen, David Simpson, Christine Malone, Mark Bond, Jim Kenny, Kristin Kelly, Rick Ortiz, Eric Earling, Wendy Valentine, Renee Radcliff Sinclair, Barbara Cothern Hawksford.

**Commission Members Excused:** Dianne Symms.

**Others in Attendance:** Ron Ledford, Joanna Ribeiro, John Campbell, Geri Modrell, Peggy Toepel, Debbi Mock, Dave Ridgeway.

**Call to Order:** Chair Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:29 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** ACTION: Commissioner Hawksford made a motion to approve the minutes of both March 22 and March 29. Commissioner Sinclair seconded the motion, and all commission members present unanimously approved it.

**Approval of Agenda:** The approval of vouchers was added to the agenda of April 12th.

ACTION: Commissioner Simpson made a motion to accept the amended agenda. Commissioner Larsen seconded the motion, and all commission members present unanimously approved it.

**Approval of Vouchers:** ACTION: Commissioner Simpson made a motion to approve the vouchers submitted. Commissioner Earling seconded the motion; an all commission members present unanimously approved it.

**Guest Speaker:** Snohomish County Superior Court Presiding Judge Thomas Wynne. Judge Wynne made a presentation on the topic of the Snohomish County Clerk and reasons why he would like to have that position be appointed and moved to under the supervision of the Courts. Please see Stephen Reinig for access to notebooks, given to the Commission by Judge Wynne, containing information he used for his presentation.

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Rauch asked Judge Wynne where this new appointed position would be in the set up of the system. Judge Wynne replied that the Clerk would

be under Dick Carlson. Commissioner Rauch then asked if Judge Wynne thought that having this position be appointed would cost more or less money. Judge Wynne answered that it would not be more than what the position is earning now.

Commissioner Valentine asked Judge Wynne if the notebooks handed out to them, and intended for use on a judicial retreat, had indeed been read, and if they had been read, was it on Snohomish County time? Judge Wynne replied that he had read the notebook and he had accomplished this on Snohomish County time.

Commissioner Valentine inquired about the benefit to the public if the Clerk was moved. Judge Wynne replied that the citizens would then know where to go for information on procedures of the court and such. There would also be the benefit of the Courts no longer having to negotiate with the Clerk. They would now be working together. Commissioner Valentine suggested that it would be important to have actual data of what is happening and how that would be affected.

Commissioner Simpson asked Judge Wynne if this new structure would continue to work if the growth of the county continued. Judge Wynne replied that there would most likely be a need for more judges, but that could be accomplished, and the real benefit would be that the Courts and the Clerk would no longer be competing. Commissioner Simpson then inquired if Judge Wynne had a hidden agenda. Judge Wynne replied that he did not.

Commissioner Kenny stated that Judge Wynne was asking the public to change the Clerk's position so that they would be working under the judges, and how would he show the public the benefits they would get out of doing this. Judge Wynne replied that if the Clerk's position were moved people would only have to go to one place to have their questions answered. He also stated that under the current set up the Courts and the Clerk's office were competing against each other for money, and that if the position of the Clerk were moved this would no longer be an issue.

Commissioner Kenny asked Judge Wynne about his thoughts on the perception that judges aren't as voter friendly as other officials. He asked how Judge Wynne thought the voters would feel comfortable contacting them. Judge Wynne replied that if this was the perception held by most, they would then feel more comfortable going to the Clerk, or administrative assistants.

Commissioner Kelly stated that in Snohomish County the voters prefer to have elected officials. She asked if it would be possible to have the position of the Clerk remain an elected position while still moving it into the new system. Judge Wynne replied that he felt it would be more efficient to have the position be appointed.

Commissioner Kelly asked if under this new system the voters would feel that the Clerk's office was getting its fair share of funds. Judge Wynne said that the disbursement of funds would still have to be approved by others, the only difference being that the Courts and the Clerks would no longer be competing against each other for money.

Commissioner Hawksford asked what county Judge Wynne would like to see Snohomish County structured like. Judge Wynne replied that he would chose to have Snohomish County structured like King County.

Commissioner Earling asked if Judge Wynne had any objection to any other county plan. Judge Wynne replied that he thought Executive appointment could lead to a conflict of interest.

Commissioner Bond stated that he felt it necessary to have actual data of the savings that would occur with the proposed system. Judge Wynne replied that coming up with an actual dollar amount to take to the voters would be tricky. Commissioner Bond asked if the new system would enhance the experience of jury duty for those who serve. Judge Wynne replied that it would.

Chair Cooper asked Judge Wynne how many cases the presiding judge tries versus the number of another judge. Judge Wynne replied that he spends half of his time trying cases, and the other half performing administrative duties. Chair Cooper stated that the presiding judge in King County does not try cases at all, and that seems to make him a highly paid clerk. Judge Wynne replied that the presiding judge should spend more of his time performing administrative duties because that is what the position entails.

**Chairs Comments:** Chair Cooper stated that there would be a public meeting on April 19th for the increase in the budget. He said that an ordinance would have to be passed in order to get the additional funds, and that the new budget was anticipated to pass.

The prosecuting attorney was asked to change the capped legal amount and that if all went according to plan the attorney would be present at the meeting of the 26th.

Chair Cooper mentioned the need to generate the public's interest as specific items are discussed, and then get together and form the editorial boards that were discussed in a previous meeting.

**Public Comment:** Chief Deputy County Clerk Mr. Ron Ledford gave statistics dealing with the current state of the County Clerk's office. He stated there is currently only one person doing jury work. He also stated that on average the Clerk's office has 91,000 walk in customers looking for assistance, and that this number reflects only the public, not any individuals with court relations.

Mr. John Campbell from Marysville spoke on term limits. He stated that term limits bother him. He feels that term limits suggest that the public is not smart enough to decide when their officials should be replaced. Mr. Campbell also stated that he would like to see the position of Sheriff be made an appointed position. On the topic of the County Clerk, Mr. Campbell said that he does not know why that position should be an elected

position because much of the public doesn't know those who are running and that voting on something you know nothing about is not beneficial to anyone.

**Issue Discussion:** Discussion commenced among the Commissioners about naming specific agencies in the charter. The legality of what this entailed was talked about, and it was mentioned that it would be a wise decision to hold off on any decisions dealing with this topic until legal council is present. Several Commissioners brought up both pros and cons about this topic.

There was also discussion on the order and importance of topics to be discussed by the Commission. Chair Cooper outlined the plan of action formulated by himself, the co-chairs, and Steve Reinig.

**Administrative Report:** The Commission was given an updated copy of the survey results published on survey monkey, as well as the additional comments posted by those who took the survey.

Steve Reinig gave the Commissioners information on background materials dealing with the location of the Sheriff on selected County Organizational Charts and comparison of initiative and referendum clauses in various counties.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

**Minutes Submitted by:**

Allena Olson  
Recorder